

Philosophy on a vague level

Logic: -Depth Grammar of Rationality
by Patrick K. Bastable
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Perhaps the first thing to point out about this book is that despite the title, it has nothing to do with depth grammar or any other aspect of linguistics. The author has tried to write a straight logic textbook covering every aspect of logic—traditional, modern and philosophical. In the nineteenth century before the revolution in logic started by Frege and Russell this might have been a practicable proposition; but logic is now too big a subject to try to cram into four hundred pages. As a result the book is often very sketchy (the problem of induction gets seven pages) and exposition is often compressed to the point of unintelligibility. It may seem rather intolerant to criticize the book for omissions, but Quine's views on the status of logic were conspicuous by their absence and an exposition of

Tarski's theory of truth would not have been amiss.

If this was all that were wrong with the book, it might still have had some value as a survey. However, this is not the case. Key words are often used without being explained (e.g. "decision procedure") and some words are used in unusual ways: "tautology" is used as synonymous with "logical truth" and "validity" is given as a third synonym.

The book also contains a large number of false or misleading claims. Popper's notion of verisimilitude is confused with his notion of corroboration. The account of Russell's theory of descriptions is completely wrong and Carnap's views on language are misrepresented.

Sloppy presentation is typical of the third of the book devoted to modern symbolic logic. No clear distinction is made between syntax and semantics, rules of formation are not clearly separated from rules of inference and in the system of natural deduction given the use of subproofs is not explained, neither

are important restrictions on the quantifier rules mentioned.

Finally, much of the philosophy is conducted on a very vague level which makes arguments difficult to follow. Sentences like "To know a reality as an object is to conceive it precisely in its potentiality to disclose itself in rational media" are not uncommon.

Much is made of the claim in the subtitles that logic is the depth grammar of rationality. Yet the exact import of this metaphor is never made at all clear. Nor does the author ever explain what he means by "rationality" and seems to be unaware that this is contentious. He is not even clear about what sort of things may be described as rational, attributing rationality at various times to the world, forms of life, thought and phenomenal development.

There are some better sections. The passages on Aristotelean logic are usually quite well done and there are some interesting exercises at the end of the first section. There is also a useful thirty-page bibliography.

Graham Priest